

"Day dawned upon one of the ocean's most beautiful mornings; the soft, blue sky circled the blue horizon, and over the broad expanse a profound calm settled upon the sleeping waters. It seemed difficult to realize that such serenity was ever tortured into the most wild and terrific commotion by the rude storms and hurricanes that often hold high revelry where now not a ruffled wave appeared or a gentle ripple bleared the mirrored surface. Solitary and alone we pursued our voyage, flattered with the hope that it would terminate without interruption. At 4 in the afternoon we were aroused from this felicitous reverie by the familiar cry from the mast-head of 'Sail ho!'

" 'Can you make her out,' was the official interrogatory.

" 'Yes, sir; a large steamer heading for us.' Our course was immediately changed; so was that of the stranger. When she was reported we were engaged in overhauling the engines and cleaning fires. Of course, our speed under these circumstances was inconsiderable, and the steamer neared us without difficulty. The old flag was recognized—in former days a welcome banner—and the chase commenced. Night approaches in a royal blazonry of gold and crimson, the sun sinks below the horizon, leaving a brief twilight to light up the scene of contest. Some derangement of our engines depletes our speed, and the unpleasant knowledge causes the thermometer of hope to fall below zero. Perplexed and annoyed, I debated the expediency of relieving the vessel by throwing overboard a portion of her cargo. Fortunately a happy thought came into my mind. Promptly acting upon the mental suggestion, I sent for the chief engineer and inquired if he had a quantity of coal dust convenient. 'I have, sir,' was the response. 'Be ready in fifteen minutes to feed with it, and have at hand clean fuel that will not smoke. The order will be given in due season.'

"In the darkness of night a chasing vessel is guided by the smoke of the fleeing craft. This fact was familiar from experience, and at the proper time I availed myself of the acquired knowledge. The enemy held his own, though at times we thought he gained upon us. At length I directed the engineer to give a liberal application of coal dust, and in-